

out a definition of 'neuropathic inheritance' such a statement leads us nowhere. It will of course be admitted that a definite correlation exists between the mental characters of the members of a family in different generations but it is probable that there must exist in addition some precipitating agent which is the *causa vera* of the condition of feeble-mindedness.

But enough! The book shews a good deal of repetition combined with a certain discursiveness and lack of clear thinking. If read without reference to other works on the subject, it will prove a misleading guide.

G.A.A.

Sanger, MARGARET. *Woman and the New Race*. New York: Brentano's. Pp. 234.

MR. HAVELOCK ELLIS contributes a preface to this short and vigorous book, every page of which vibrates with the enthusiasm of the authoress for the propaganda which it is designed to further. This propaganda is that which aims at spreading a knowledge of the methods of birth control. Very briefly summarised the argument is that woman has been throughout the ages an unwilling instrument in the production of unnecessarily large families—that she is enclosed in a 'vicious circle' out of which a path is now open by means of the knowledge referred to above.

What Mrs. Sanger has to say upon the subject of the practice of birth control family life and the absurd restrictions in the way of a discussion of the subject in America is set out with clearness, force and good sense. Discussion of this kind should be welcomed even by those who do not agree with her. But, unfortunately, much of the argument rests upon a very crude exposition of the relation of the birth-rate to social problems in general. According to Mrs. Sanger such customs as abortion and infanticide in the past are traceable to the efforts of woman to free herself from the 'vicious circle' and the failure to do so has at all times and in all places led to war, low wages, overcrowding and every kind of undesirable social condition.

The latter part of this argument is still so common that we may turn to consider it shortly after remarking that the reference which Mrs. Sanger makes to the historical aspect of the problem, though brief, is valuable. Mrs. Sanger comments upon the fact that the practices of abortion and infanticide were once widespread. Knowledge of primitive races has in fact so much increased of late that it appears probable that customs having as their object the restriction of numbers were in the normal state of primitive society everywhere practised. To the customs of abortion and infanticide should be added the custom of abstaining from intercourse for prolonged periods as widely practised among the Bantu races and in Polynesia. The existence of one or more of these practices in Greece, Rome and the ancient world is well known. They have persisted to the present day among those races which were left out of the main current of Western European cultural development—in China, India and Japan, for instance. They disappeared as recognised practices in Europe with the rise and spread of Christianity. In mediaeval Europe postponement of marriage would

seem to have taken their place and at the present day in modern European countries and their derivatives in America, Australia and elsewhere regulation is coming to be practised by a new method.

Such very briefly is perhaps the true story of the history of the regulations of numbers; though Mrs. Sanger does no more than allude to it, such an allusion at least shows the recognition of the fact that there is an historical side to the matter. But when Mrs. Sanger goes on, following not the modern development of economic thought but a crude and confused development of Malthusian teaching, and attributes nearly all the undesirable features of social history to super-abundant numbers, we cannot follow her. Modern economists hold that there is—given any set conditions—an optimum number; if there are more than that number or if there are less, the average return per head will not be so large. It seems quite clear that in modern industrial countries numbers approach on the whole the optimum number, though there may be, as apparently in England to-day, true over-population in the lowest class composed of the casual and the shiftless which is found at the bottom of the social scale in all industrial countries. In other words, with the increase of population in the last century in these countries there has been an increase in the average income per head. If, then, the social evils of unemployment, low wages and so on are not, so far as this era is concerned, to be attributed, except perhaps in small part, to over-population, is there any reason for holding them to have been the result of over-population in former times? It is a difficult problem, but it cannot be lightly assumed, as is done by Mrs. Sanger, that over-population was the cause of the evils which she deplores—though, if it is not so, it does not, it is true, invalidate what she has to say as to the former position of woman or as to the necessity of some method of regulating numbers to-day. This is indeed the reason why her very positive assertions on this subject are to be regretted; it makes it appear that the case for regulating numbers depends on the truth of the theory that war and other evils are and have been due to over-population whereas, even if this is not so, the case for regulation is overwhelming; otherwise the optimum number cannot be attained or maintained. This is the problem which those who oppose birth control should face and seldom do face. Is it or is it not the best method? Abortion and infanticide being out of the question, the only alternatives appear to be postponement of marriage or restriction of intercourse between married persons. Are these methods, if practicable, more or less desirable than birth control?

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